



US009380831B2

(12) **United States Patent**  
**Craig et al.**

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,380,831 B2**  
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Jul. 5, 2016**

(54) **ARTICLE OF APPAREL WITH ZONAL  
FORCE ATTENUATION PROPERTIES**

(75) Inventors: **Kenneth Todd Craig**, Beaverton, OR  
(US); **Hagit Ottens-Wilk**, Odijk (NL);  
**Donna L. Marchant**, Amsterdam (NL)

(73) Assignee: **NIKE, Inc.**, Beaverton, OR (US)

(\*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this  
patent is extended or adjusted under 35  
U.S.C. 154(b) by 1930 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **11/262,323**

(22) Filed: **Oct. 28, 2005**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2007/0094892 A1 May 3, 2007

(51) **Int. Cl.**  
**A43B 7/14** (2006.01)  
**A43B 13/18** (2006.01)  
**A41B 11/02** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**  
CPC ..... **A43B 13/188** (2013.01); **A41B 11/02**  
(2013.01); **A43B 7/142** (2013.01); **A43B 7/143**  
(2013.01); **A43B 7/144** (2013.01); **A43B**  
**7/1415** (2013.01); **A43B 7/1425** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**  
CPC ..... A43B 3/0036; A43B 7/14; A43B 7/141;  
A43B 7/142–7/145; A43B 7/1495; A41B  
11/003; A41B 11/02  
USPC ..... 36/9 R, 10, 117.6, 140; 2/239–241  
See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

2,001,293 A \* 5/1935 Wilson ..... 66/171  
3,793,851 A 2/1974 Thorneburg

4,194,249 A	3/1980	Thorneburg	
4,253,317 A	3/1981	Howard et al.	
4,255,949 A	3/1981	Thorneburg	
4,277,959 A	7/1981	Thorneburg	
4,373,215 A *	2/1983	Guigley	2/239
4,373,361 A	2/1983	Thorneburg	
4,520,635 A *	6/1985	Shields et al.	66/185
4,732,015 A	3/1988	Abrams et al.	
5,014,706 A *	5/1991	Philipp	36/140
5,307,522 A	5/1994	Throneburg et al.	
5,335,517 A	8/1994	Throneburg et al.	
5,603,232 A	2/1997	Throneburg	
5,771,495 A	6/1998	Turner et al.	
5,791,163 A	8/1998	Throneburg	
6,021,527 A	2/2000	Lessard	
6,176,025 B1 *	1/2001	Patterson et al.	36/28
6,286,151 B1	9/2001	Lambertz	

(Continued)

#### OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Three photographs of “Kayano Low Cut” Socks, Manufactured by  
Asics.

(Continued)

*Primary Examiner* — Khoa Huynh

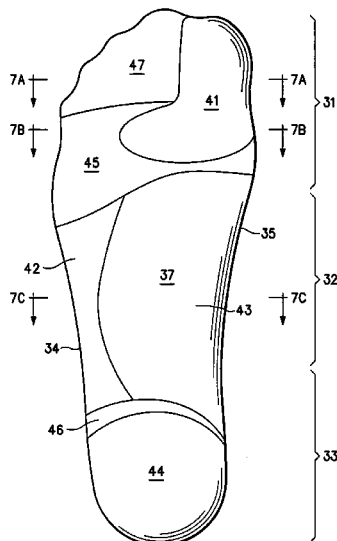
*Assistant Examiner* — Sharon M Prange

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Banner & Witcoff, Ltd.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An article of apparel, such as a sock or a shoe, is disclosed as  
having a foot-supporting area for extending adjacent to a  
plantar surface of a foot. The foot-supporting area has various  
zones of differing thickness that attenuate forces upon the  
plantar surface to different degrees. The apparel may be  
manufactured through a process that includes utilizing a force  
mapping device to obtain data relating to forces upon the  
plantar surface of the foot. The sock is then formed to have  
zones of different thickness located to correspond with the  
areas of the plantar surface subjected to different magnitudes  
of forces.

**33 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets**



(56)

**References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

6,324,874	B2	12/2001	Fujimoto	
6,510,626	B1 *	1/2003	Greenawalt	36/43
6,789,333	B2 *	9/2004	Nishiwaki et al.	36/28
7,051,457	B1 *	5/2006	Huggins	A41B 11/004 2/238

7,210,250	B2 *	5/2007	Gallegos	36/44
7,484,319	B2 *	2/2009	Cheskin et al.	36/44

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Internet Publication for "X-Socks" Product, downloaded May 3, 2005 from <http://www.x-socks.com>.

\* cited by examiner

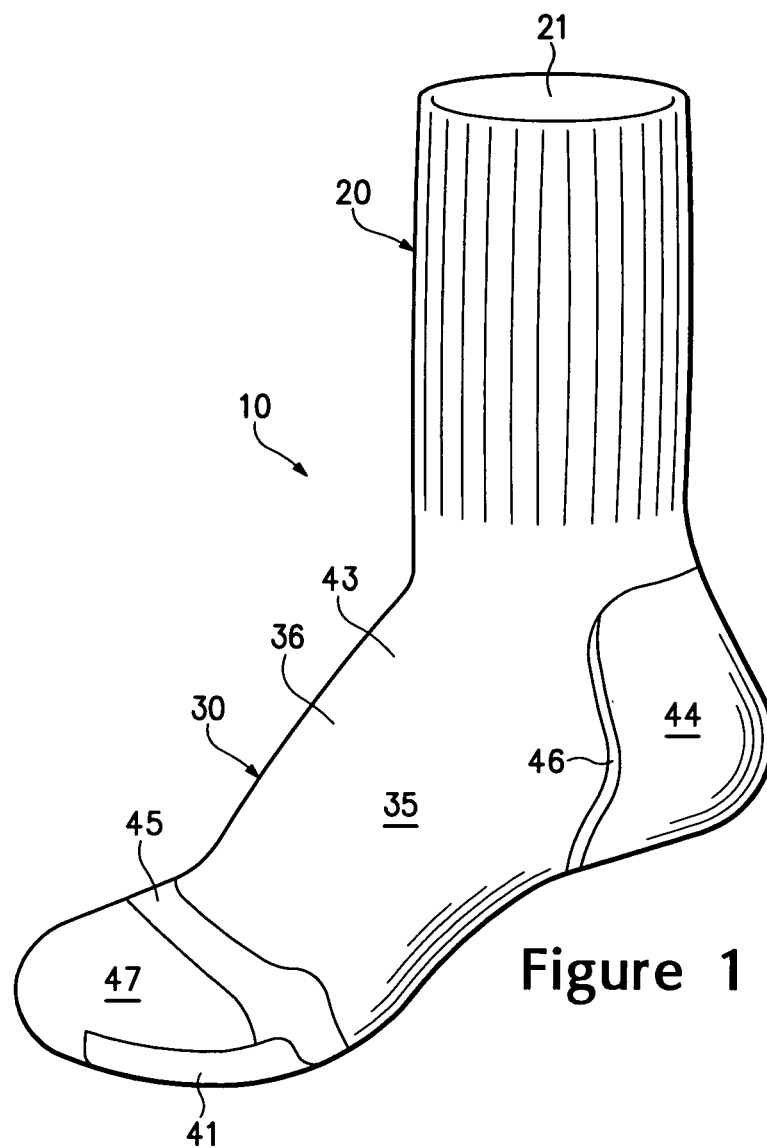
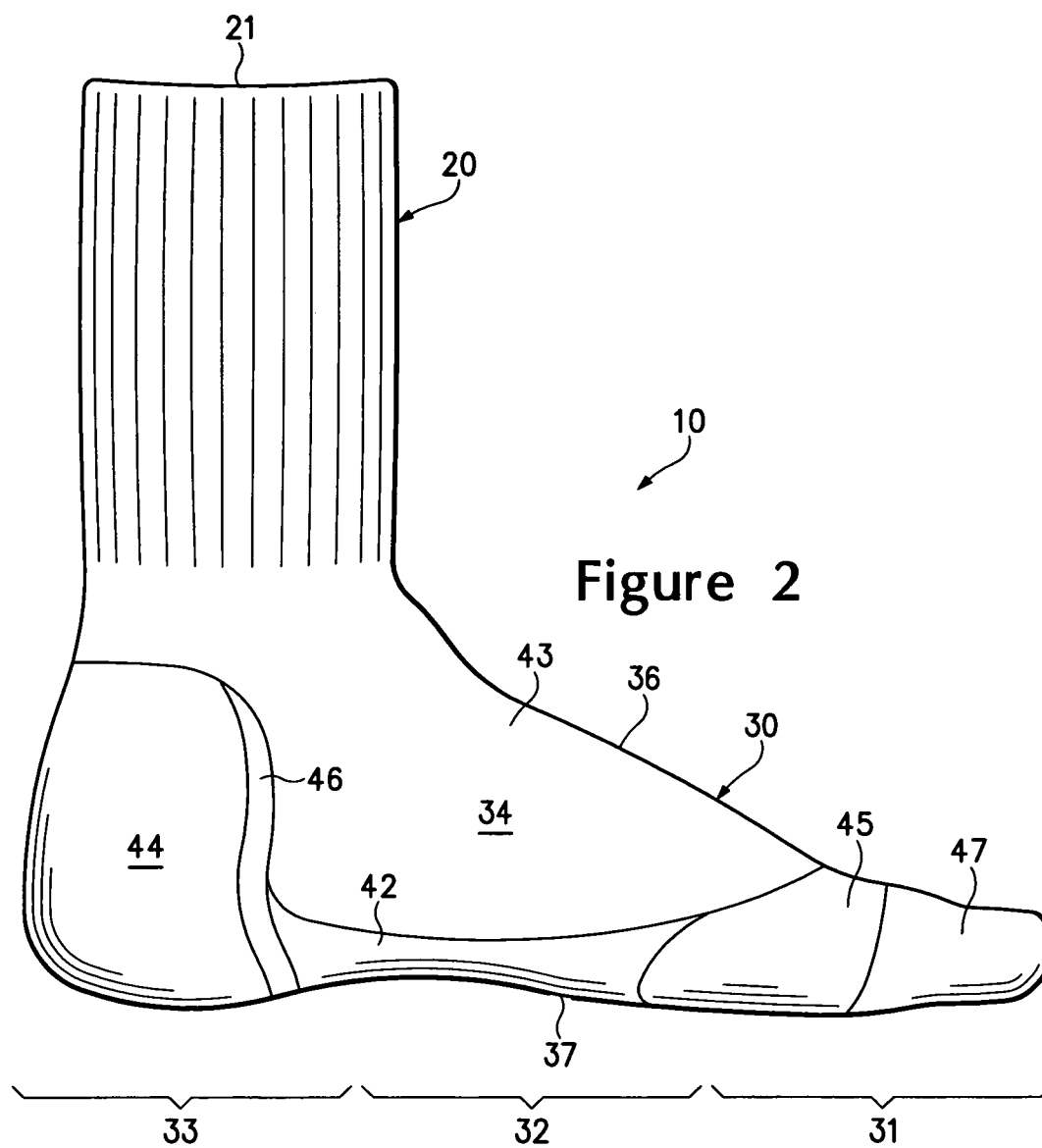
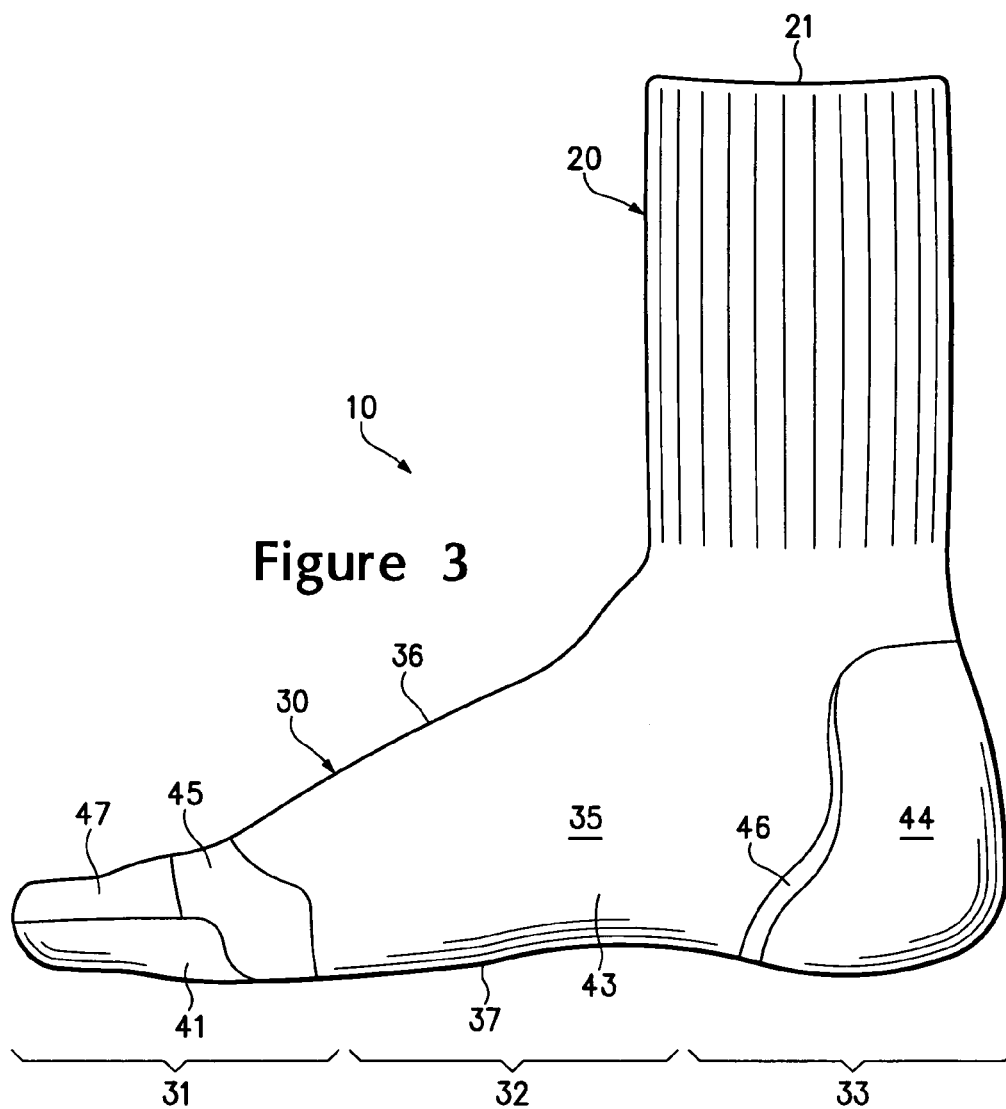


Figure 1





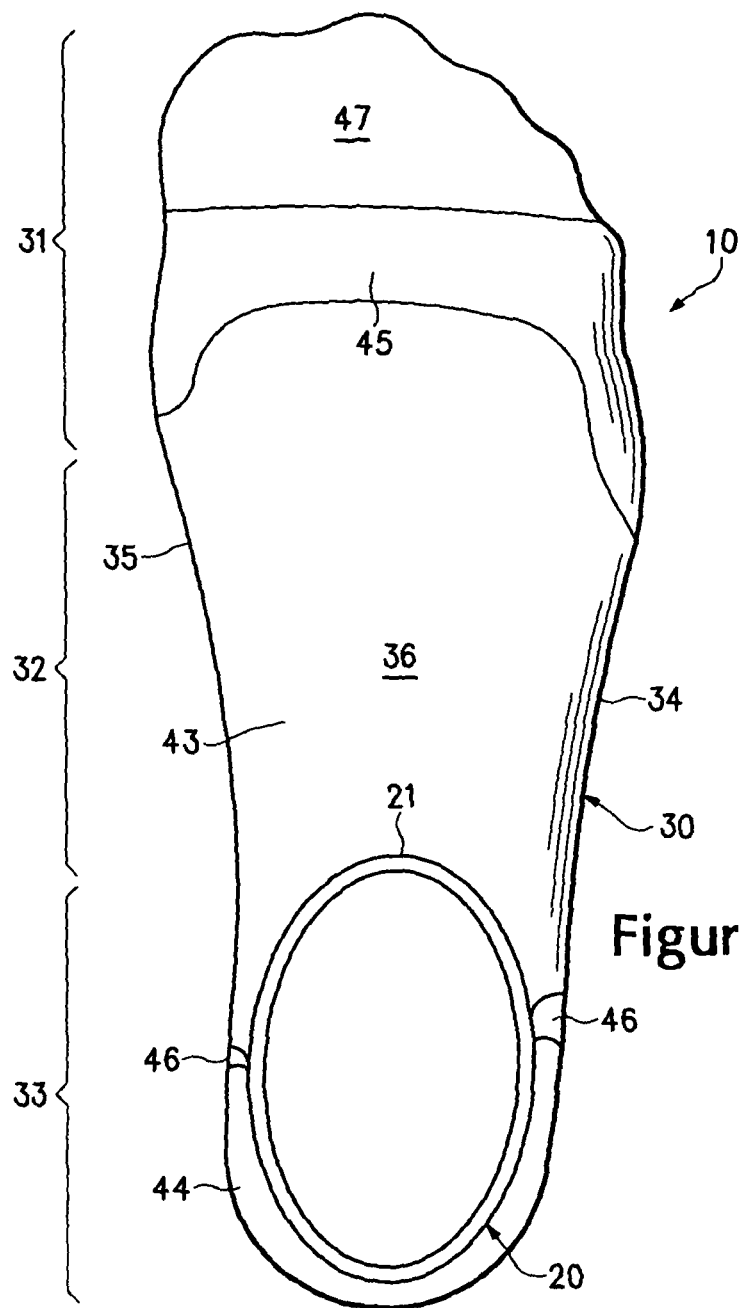
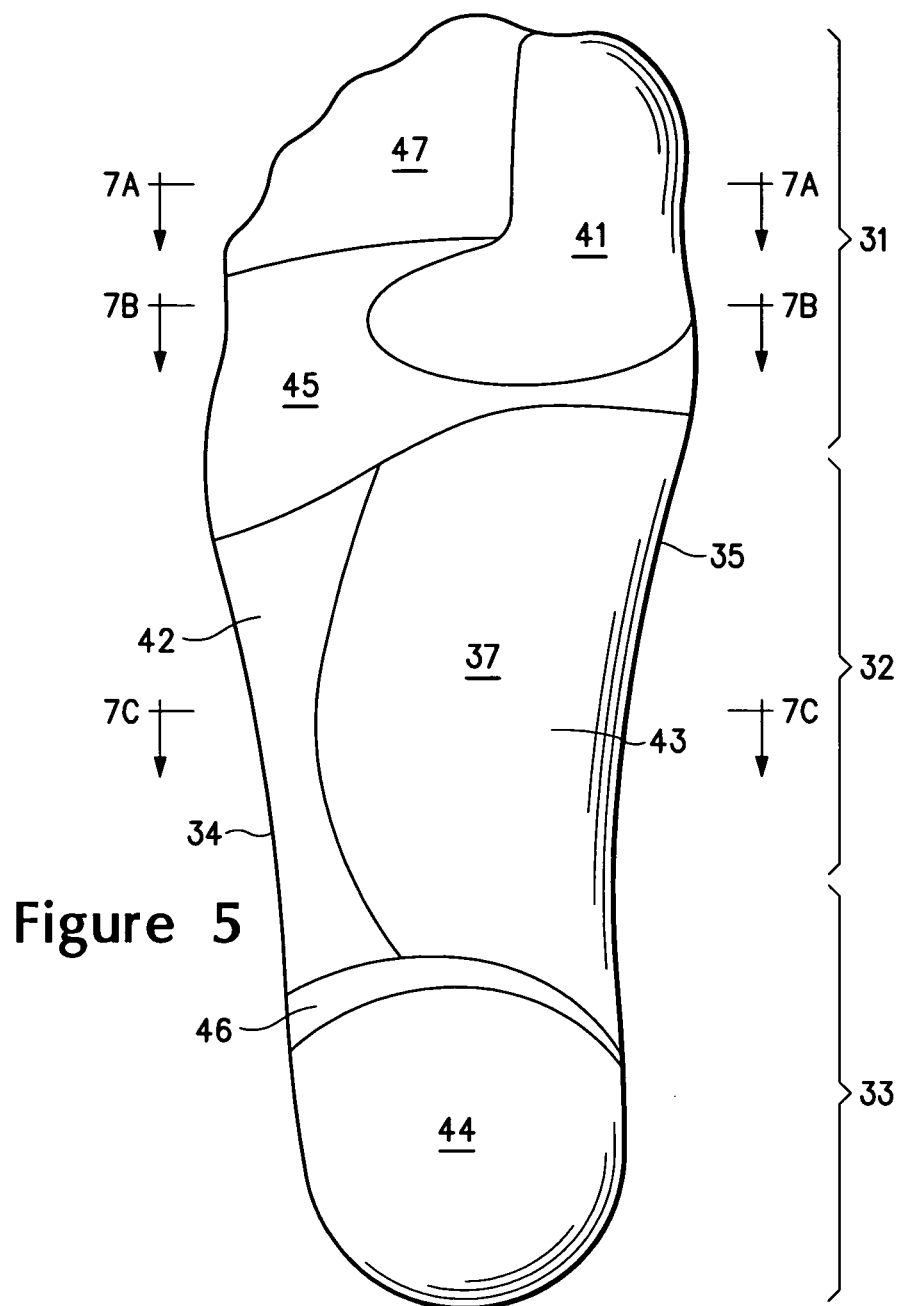


Figure 4



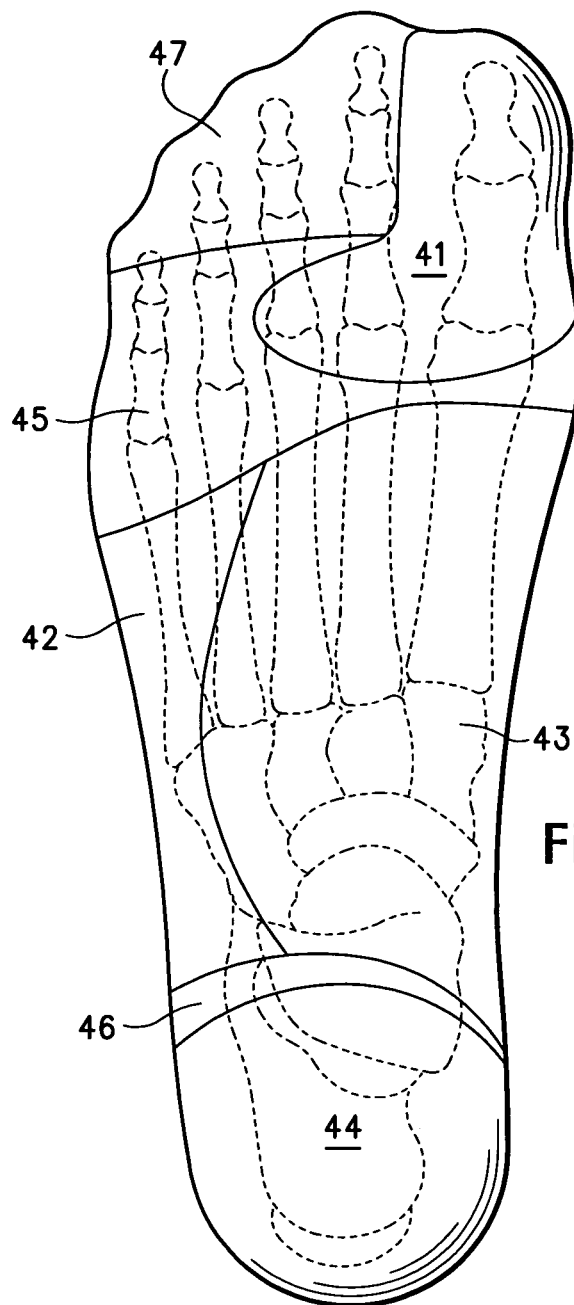


Figure 6



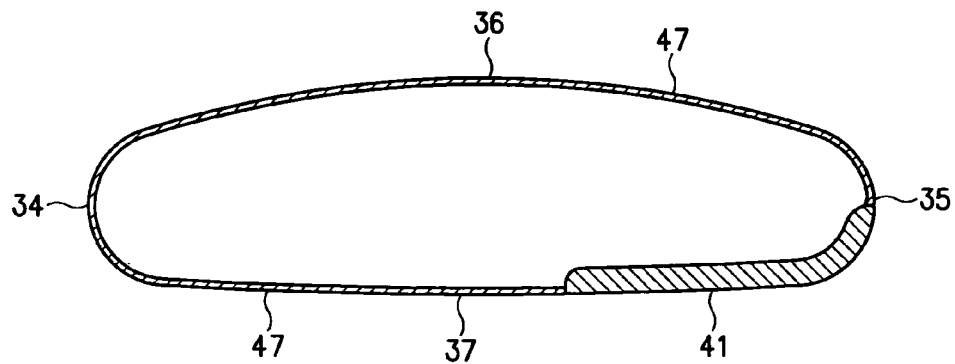


Figure 7A

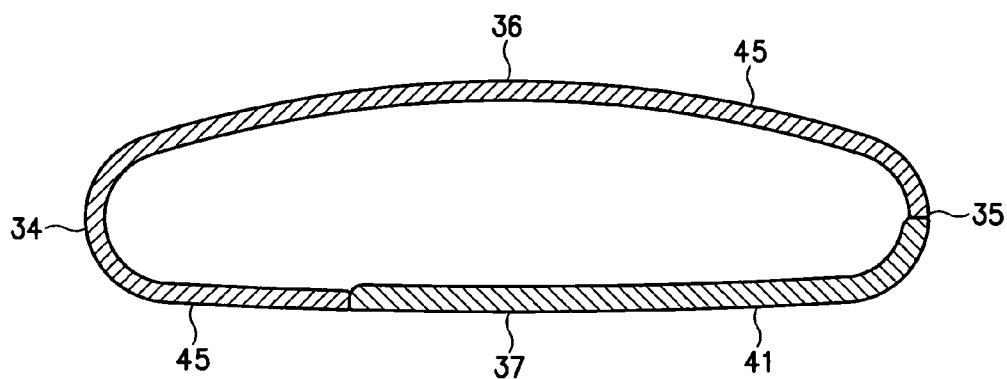


Figure 7B

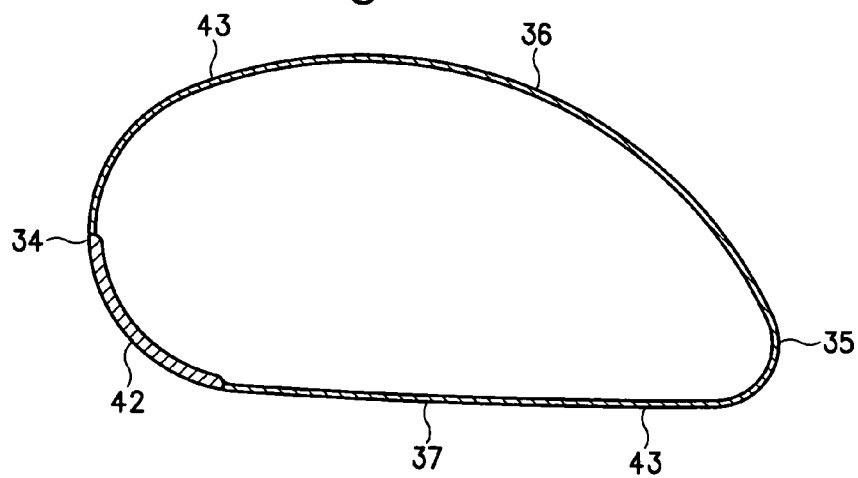


Figure 7C

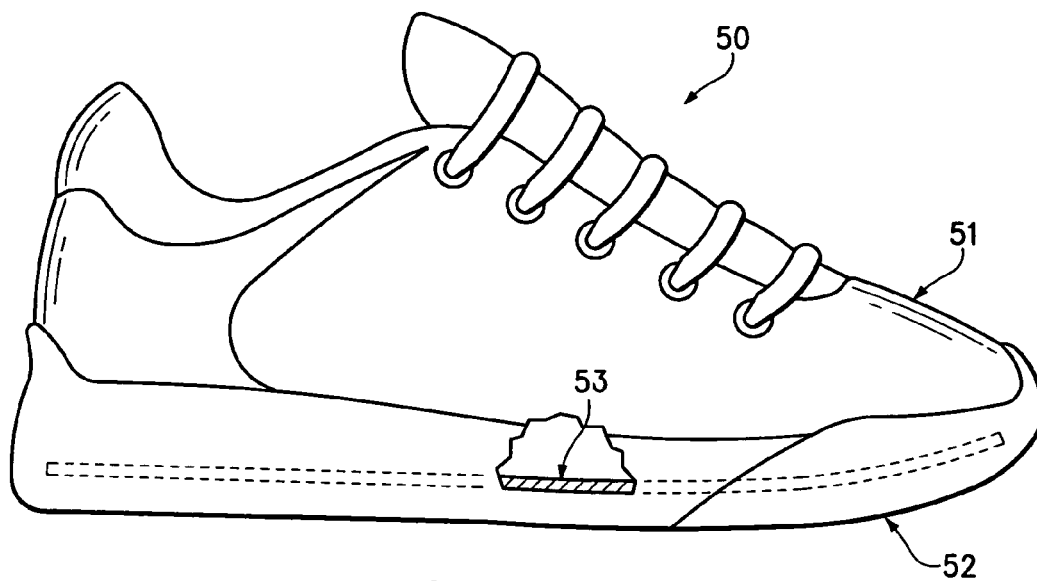


Figure 8

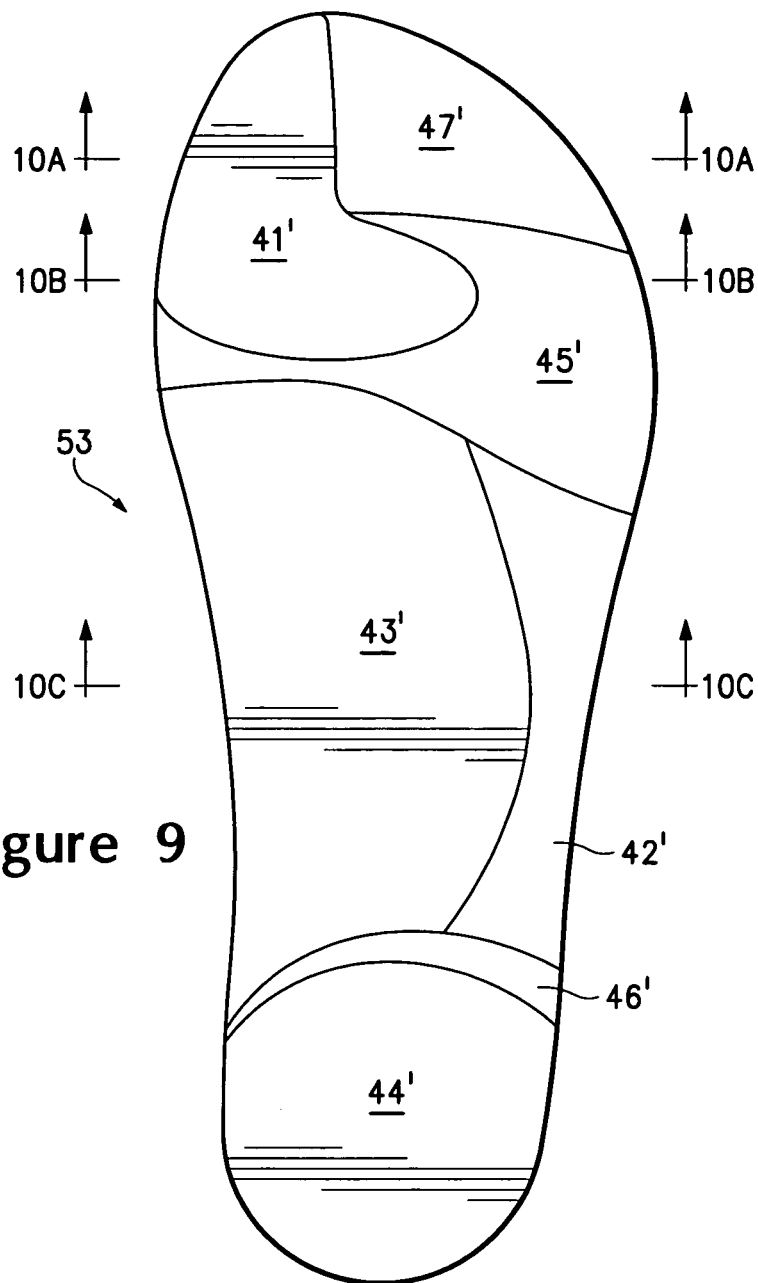


Figure 9



Figure 10A



Figure 10B



Figure 10C

# ARTICLE OF APPAREL WITH ZONAL FORCE ATTENUATION PROPERTIES

## BACKGROUND

A foot may experience significant forces during walking, running, and other ambulatory activities. During running, for example, the motion of the foot generally proceeds as follows: Initially, a heel region of the foot strikes the ground, followed sequentially by an arch region and a forefoot region of the foot. As the heel region leaves the ground, the foot rolls forward so that the forefoot region, including the toes, makes contact with the ground. Finally, the entire foot leaves the ground to begin another cycle. During the time that the foot is in contact with the ground, the foot typically rolls from the outside (i.e., lateral side) to the inside (i.e., medial side), a process called pronation. That is, normally, the outside of the heel region strikes the ground first, and the toes on the inside of the foot leave the ground last.

Supporting the weight of the individual, imparting balance to the individual, and flexing to accommodate the motion of the foot discussed above may induce bending, tensile, and compressive forces in the various bones, muscles, ligaments, and tendons associated with the foot. Compressing a plantar surface (i.e., lower surface) of the foot against the ground or the interior of an article of footwear also induces compressive forces in the plantar surface. A magnitude of the compressive forces experienced by the plantar surface of the foot varies throughout the plantar surface. That is, some areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively high magnitude, while other areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively low magnitude.

An article of athletic footwear generally incorporates a sole structure with a polymer foam material that attenuates forces experienced by the foot. Fluid-filled bladders, for example, may be encapsulated within the polymer foam material to further assist with force attenuation, and moderators may be incorporated into the sole structure to distribute forces with a higher magnitude over a greater area of the plantar surface, thereby decreasing the peak forces experienced by an area of the plantar surface. Despite these footwear elements, however, the compressive forces experienced by the foot continue to vary throughout the plantar surface.

## SUMMARY

An aspect of the present invention is an article of apparel, such as a sock or shoe, that has varying force attenuation properties in portions corresponding with a plantar surface of a foot. The varying force attenuation properties may be formed through areas of different thickness in the apparel, and the varying force attenuation properties may be located in various zones that correspond with areas of different compressive forces experienced by the foot during ambulatory activities.

One aspect of the invention is an article of apparel having a foot-supporting area for extending adjacent to a plantar surface of a foot. The foot-supporting area has a forefoot region, an arch region, and a heel region. The forefoot region has a first zone positioned on a medial side of the foot-supporting area, and the first zone has a first thickness. The arch region has (a) a second zone positioned on a lateral side of the foot-supporting area, the second zone having a second thickness that is less than the first thickness and (b) a third zone positioned on the medial side of the foot-supporting area, the third zone having a third thickness that is less than the second thickness. The heel region has a fourth zone posi-

tioned on at least the lateral side of the foot-supporting area, the fourth zone having the first thickness.

In another aspect of the invention, the foot-supporting area has a first zone, a second zone, and a third zone. The first zone has an L-shaped configuration and corresponds in location with a position of a first proximal phalanx and at least first through third metacarpo-phalangeal joints of the foot. In addition, the first zone has a first thickness. The second zone corresponds in location with a calcaneus of the foot, and the second zone has the first thickness. The third zone corresponds in location with areas not corresponding with the first zone and the second zone, and the third zone has at least one thickness that is less than the first thickness.

Yet another aspect of the invention is a method of manufacturing a sock for receiving a foot. The method includes a step of utilizing a force mapping device to obtain data relating to forces upon a plantar surface of the foot during an ambulatory cycle. The data is analyzed to determine areas of the plantar surface subjected to forces above a threshold value during the ambulatory cycle. The sock is then formed to have zones of different thickness. One of the zones of different thickness is located to correspond with the areas of the plantar surface subjected to the forces above the threshold value.

In a further aspect of the invention a method of manufacturing a sock includes steps of (a) forming a heel zone of the sock with a circular knitting machine in a reciprocating mode, (b) forming a midfoot zone of the sock with the circular knitting machine in a circular mode, and (c) forming a forefoot zone of the sock with the circular knitting machine in the reciprocating mode. At least one of the heel zone and the forefoot zone include a first area that is thicker than a second area, and the first area and the second area are formed with the circular knitting machine in the reciprocating mode.

The advantages and features of novelty characterizing various aspects of the invention are pointed out with particularity in the appended claims. To gain an improved understanding of the advantages and features of novelty, however, reference may be made to the following descriptive matter and accompanying drawings that describe and illustrate various embodiments and concepts related to the aspects of the invention.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing Summary, as well as the following Detailed Description, will be better understood when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an article of apparel in accordance with aspects of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a first side elevational view of the article of apparel.

FIG. 3 is a second side elevational view of the article of apparel.

FIG. 4 is a top plan view of the article of apparel.

FIG. 5 is a bottom plan view of the article of apparel.

FIG. 6 is a bottom plan view of the article of apparel with bones of a foot superimposed over the apparel.

FIGS. 7A-7C are cross-sectional views of the article of apparel, as respectively defined by section lines 7A-7C in FIG. 5.

FIG. 8 is a side elevational view of an article of apparel in accordance with aspects of the invention.

FIG. 9 is a top plan view of a sockliner of the article of apparel.

FIGS. 10A-10C are cross-sectional views of the sockliner, as respectively defined by section lines 10A-10C in FIG. 9.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The following discussion and accompanying figures disclose various articles of apparel with zonal force attenuation

properties. During walking, running, and other ambulatory activities, the plantar surface of the foot experiences various compressive forces, and the magnitude of the compressive forces varies throughout the plantar surface. That is, some areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively high magnitude, while other areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively low magnitude. The various articles of apparel disclosed herein incorporate various zones with differing force attenuation properties. The zones, which attenuate forces to differing degrees, are positioned to correspond with areas of the plantar surface that experience different magnitudes of forces.

A sock **10** in accordance with various aspects of the invention is disclosed in FIGS. 1-6. Sock **10** has a generally tubular structure that includes an ankle-receiving portion **20** and a foot-receiving portion **30**. When worn by an individual, ankle-receiving portion **20** extends around an ankle of the individual and foot-receiving portion **30** extends around a foot of the individual. In order to provide access to the interior of sock **10**, ankle-receiving portion **20** defines an access opening **21** located opposite foot-receiving portion **30**. Although sock **10** may have a generally linear configuration, ankle-receiving portion **20** and foot-receiving portion **30** are depicted as being angled with respect to each other to impart an angled configuration to sock **10**.

Each of portions **20** and **30** may be formed through a knitting process, for example, from various yarns that stretch or otherwise deform to receive and extend around the ankle and the foot when worn by the individual. Portions **20** and **30** may, therefore, conform to the contours of the ankle and foot so as to extend along the surfaces of the ankle and foot without significant wrinkling or overlapping of the material forming sock **10**. When sock **10** is worn by the individual and placed within an article of footwear, therefore, sock **10** provides a comfortable interface between the foot and the footwear.

Foot-receiving portion **30** may be divided into three general regions: a forefoot region **31**, an arch region **32**, and a heel region **33**. Forefoot region **31** generally includes areas of foot-receiving portion **30** corresponding with the toes and the joints connecting metatarsals with phalanges. Arch region **32** generally includes areas of foot-receiving portion **30** corresponding with the arch area of the foot. Similarly, heel region **33** generally includes areas of foot-receiving portion **30** corresponding with rear areas of the foot, including the calcaneus bone. Regions **31-33** are not intended to demarcate precise areas of foot-receiving portion **30**. Rather, regions **31-33** are intended to represent general areas of foot-receiving portion **30** to aid in the following discussion.

Foot-receiving portion **30** also includes a lateral side **34**, a medial side **35**, an upper area **36**, and a foot-supporting area **37**. Lateral side **34** and medial side **35** extend through each of regions **31-33** and correspond with opposite sides of foot-receiving portion **30**. When sock **10** is worn by the individual, lateral side **34** and medial side **35** respectively extend along opposite lateral and medial sides of the foot. Upper area **36** and foot-supporting area **37** also extend through each of regions **31-33** and respectively correspond with an upper area and an opposite lower area of foot-receiving portion **30**. When sock **10** is worn by the individual, upper area **36** and foot-supporting area **37** respectively extend along an upper and an opposite lower (i.e., plantar) surface of the foot. As with regions **31-33**, sides **34-35** and areas **36-37** are not intended to demarcate precise areas of foot-receiving portion **30**. Rather, sides **34-35** and areas **36-37** are intended to represent general areas of foot-receiving portion **30** to aid in the following discussion.

Many conventional socks have a substantially constant thickness throughout the foot-receiving portion. In contrast with these conventional socks, sock **10** includes various zones **41-47** that extend throughout foot-receiving portion **30** and exhibit one of a variety of thicknesses. As discussed above, the plantar surface of the foot experiences various compressive forces during ambulatory activities. Some areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively high magnitude, while other areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively low magnitude. Zones **41-47** exhibit differing force attenuation properties and are positioned to correspond with areas of the plantar surface that experience different magnitudes of forces. Although some of zones **41-47** extend onto one or more of lateral side **34**, medial side **35**, and upper area **36**, the position of zones **41-47** will be primarily discussed in relation to foot-supporting area **37** given that this portion of sock **10** corresponds with the plantar surface of the foot.

Zone **41** is primarily located in forefoot region **31** and has an L-shaped configuration. An area of the zone **41** (i.e., the vertical segment in the L-shaped configuration) extends along a portion of foot-supporting area **37** that is adjacent to medial side **35**, and another area of the zone **41** (i.e., the horizontal segment in the L-shaped configuration) extends into a center of foot-supporting area **37**. With respect to the foot, zone **41** corresponds in location with a position of a first proximal phalanx and at least a first metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot, a second metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot, and a third metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot.

Zone **42** is primarily located in arch region **32** and has an elongate configuration that extends along a portion of foot-supporting area **37** that is adjacent to lateral side **34**. In comparison with ends of zone **42**, a central area curves inward to impart a generally hourglass-shaped configuration. With respect to the foot, zone **42** corresponds in location with at least rearward portions of a fifth metatarsal of the foot.

Zone **43** is also primarily located in arch region **32**. Whereas zone **42** extends along the portion of foot-supporting area **37** that is adjacent to lateral side **34**, zone **43** extends along a portion of foot-supporting area **37** that is adjacent to medial side **35** and also extends onto medial side **35** and upper area **36**. That is, zone **43** may wrap around the foot to cover portions of the plantar surface, medial side, and upper surface of the foot, for example. With respect to the foot, portions of zone **43** associated with foot-supporting area **37** correspond in location with first through third metatarsals of the foot. Depending upon the structure of the foot and the manner in which sock **10** fits the foot, either of zones **42** and **43** may correspond in location with portions of a fourth metatarsal.

Zone **44** is primarily located in heel region **33** and is depicted as extending between lateral side **34** and medial side **35** to cover a majority of heel region **33**. In alternate structures of sock **10**, however, zone **44** may be limited to a portion of foot-supporting area **37** that is adjacent to lateral side **34**. With respect to the foot, zone **44** corresponds in location with a calcaneus of the foot.

Zone **45** is primarily located in forefoot region **31**, but may also extend into arch region **32**. Zone **45** extends around the area of zone **41** corresponding with the horizontal segment in the L-shaped configuration. Accordingly, portions of zone **45** are located forward, rearward, and to a side of zone **41**. Zone **45** also extends entirely around foot-receiving portion **30** so as to cover portions of lateral side **34**, medial side **35**, and upper area **36**. With respect to the foot, portions of zone **45** associated with foot-supporting area **37** correspond in location with, for example, a fourth metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot and a fifth metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot.

5

Zone 46 is primarily located in heel region 33, but may also extend into arch region 32. Zone 46 extends across foot-supporting area 37 and between lateral side 34 and medial side 35. More particularly, zone 46 is located adjacent to zone 44 and separates zone 44 from each of zones 42 and 43. Zone 47 is primarily located in forefoot region 31 and extends throughout areas of forefoot region 31 not otherwise covered by zones 41 and 45. Portions of zone 47 also extend onto upper area 36 so as to extend over the phalanges of the foot.

Zones 41-47 exhibit differing degrees of force attenuation. More particularly, zones 41 and 44 provide a first degree of force attenuation that is greater than the degree of force attenuation imparted by zones 42-43 and 45-47. Zones 45 and 46 provide a second degree of force attenuation that is less than the first degree of force attenuation. Zone 42 provides a third degree of force attenuation that is less than either of the first degree and the second degree of force attenuation. Finally, zones 43 and 47 provide a fourth degree of force attenuation that is less than all of the first degree, second degree, and third degree of force attenuation. In further configurations of sock 10, additional zones or additional degrees of force attenuation may be utilized.

A variety of configurations in sock 10 may be employed to impart the differences between the force attenuation properties of zones 41-47. As an example, yarns with different yarn counts or yarns formed from different materials may be utilized in zones 41-47 in order to vary the force attenuation properties of zones 41-47. Some of zones 41-47 may be formed to include a terry knit wherein yarns form loops on the surface of foot-receiving portion 30. Variations in the size of the loops or the presence of the loops may be utilized to vary the force attenuation properties of zones 41-47. Variations in the types of knit structures that form zones 41-47 are a further example of configurations may be employed to impart the differences between the force attenuation properties of zones 41-47. Additionally, the number of layers of material in zones 41-47 may be utilized to vary the force attenuation properties.

Some configurations of sock 10 that vary the force attenuation properties of zones 41-47 may have a common thickness. That is, the thickness of zones 41 and 44, which provide the first degree of force attenuation, may be the same as the thickness of zones 43 and 47, which provide the fourth degree of force attenuation. Accordingly, differences in force attenuation may be achieved without differences in the thickness between various zones 41-47. Utilizing yarns with different yarn counts, varying the size of loops in terry knit areas, and varying the number of layers of material in zones 41-47 may each impart, however, differences in the thicknesses of zones 41-47.

With reference to FIGS. 7A-7C, various cross-sections through sock 10 are depicted to illustrate differences in the thicknesses between some of zones 41-47. FIG. 7A depicts a cross-section through forefoot region 31 to show the relative locations and thicknesses of zones 41 and 47. FIG. 7B depicts another cross-section through forefoot region 31, and behind the cross-section of FIG. 7A, to show the relative locations and thicknesses of zones 41 and 45. Similarly, FIG. 7C depicts a cross-section through arch region 32 to show the relative locations and thicknesses of zones 42 and 43.

Although the positions of zones 41-47 are depicted in the figures and discussed above with specificity, these positions may vary significantly. In some configurations of sock 10, for example, zone 41 may extend under each of the metacarpophalangeal joints. Zone 45 may also extend forward to replace portions of zone 47, or the width of zone 42 may increase. Accordingly, the specific positions of zones 41-47 may vary significantly. In order to provide the individual with

6

knowledge of the specific positions for zones 41-47, the yarns associated with various zones 41-47 may vary in color. As noted above, yarns with different yarn counts may be utilized to impart differing force attenuation properties. If each of the yarns exhibit different colors, then zones 41-47 with common force attenuation properties will be formed from yarns with common colors, and those zones 41-47 with different force attenuation properties will be formed from yarns with different colors.

As discussed above, some areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively high magnitude during ambulatory activities, while other areas of the plantar surface experience forces with a relatively low magnitude. Zones 41-47, which attenuate forces to differing degrees, are positioned to correspond with areas of the plantar surface of the foot that experience different magnitudes of forces. That is, zones 41 and 44, which impart the greatest degree of force attenuation, are positioned to correspond with the areas of the plantar surface of the foot that experience forces with a relatively high magnitude. Similarly, each of zones 42-43 and 45-47 are positioned to impart force attenuation that is based upon the magnitude of the forces experienced by corresponding portions of the plantar surface.

In order to determine where zones 41-47 should be positioned and the corresponding force attenuation properties for zones 41-47, a force mapping device may be utilized to obtain data relating to forces upon a plantar surface of the foot during an ambulatory cycle. In general, the force mapping device measures the forces in various areas of the plantar surface to provide data on the areas of the plantar surface of the foot that are subjected to different magnitudes of forces. As an example, the force mapping device may include a matrix of sensors distributed throughout a sockliner of an article of footwear, and each of the sensors may correspond with a unique location on the plantar surface of the foot. As the individual runs or walks, the sensors will determine forces associated with each location.

The data is then analyzed to determine areas of the plantar surface subjected to forces above a threshold value, for example, during the ambulatory cycle. A sock is then formed to have zones of different thickness, and one of the zones of different thickness is located to correspond with the areas of the plantar surface subjected to the forces above the threshold value. With respect to sock 10, zones 41 and 44 correspond with areas of the plantar surface that experience forces with a relatively high magnitude (i.e., above the threshold). Zones 42 and 45-46 are formed to correspond with areas of the plantar surface experiencing intermediate degrees of force, and zones 43 and 47 are formed to correspond with areas of the plantar surface experiencing lesser forces.

Sock 10 has a configuration that is suitable for a right foot of the individual. Another sock having a configuration that is suitable for a left foot of the individual may be formed to have a similar structure, but wherein zones 41-47 are arranged in an opposite (i.e., mirror image) configuration. In order to provide the individual with knowledge regarding which foot sock 10 is suitable for, an "R" or other identifier may be knitted into the structure of sock 10 to indicate that sock 10 is intended for the right foot. That is, socks within the scope of the present invention may include identifiers to ensure that the socks are utilized with the proper foot of the individual.

A benefit to forming sock 10 with zones 41-47 relates to the resulting mass of sock 10. Whereas zones 41 and 44 are relatively thick, zones 43 and 47 are relatively thin. In comparison with zones 41 and 44, the mass of zones 43 and 47 per unit area is decreased. In areas where lesser force attenuation is required, therefore, zones with a lesser mass per unit area

may be utilized, thereby decreasing the overall mass of sock 10. The overall decrease in mass and thickness may also result in enhanced moisture management properties and enhanced fit when located within a shoe.

Sock 10 is formed from a textile material. Textiles generally fall into two categories. The first category includes textiles produced directly from webs of fibers or filaments by bonding, fusing, or interlocking to construct non-woven fabrics and felts. The second category includes textiles formed through a mechanical manipulation of yarn. The various techniques for mechanically-manipulating yarn into a textile include interweaving, intertwining and twisting, and interlooping. Interweaving is the intersection of two yarns that cross and interweave at substantially right angles to each other. The yarns utilized in interweaving are conventionally referred to as warp and weft. Intertwining and twisting encompasses procedures such as braiding and knotting where yarns intertwine with each other to form a textile. Interlooping involves the formation of a plurality of columns of intermeshed loops, with knitting being the most common method of interlooping.

Although any of the textile types and techniques for mechanically-manipulating yarn into a textile, as discussed above, are suitable for sock 10, a circular knitting process provides a specific example of a suitable technique that produces a seamless textile having a tubular structure. In a circular knitting process, a circular knitting machine operates in a circular mode to form a tubular structure. In areas where the tubular structure has an angled configuration or the tube narrows to a closed end, the circular knitting machine may operate in a reciprocating mode. In the manufacture of sock 10, a substantial portion of ankle-receiving portion 20 may be formed with a circular knitting machine in the circular mode. In the transition between ankle-receiving portion 20 and foot-receiving portion 30, the circular knitting machine may operate in the reciprocating mode to form portions of heel region 33. In forming arch region 32, the circular knitting machine will return to the circular mode. Finally, in forming forefoot region 31, and particularly the narrow forward area of forefoot region 31, the circular knitting operates in the reciprocating mode. Forward areas of forefoot region 31 include zones 41 and 47, and zone 41 exhibits a greater thickness than zone 47 due to, for example, different yarn counts in the yarns associated with zones 41 and 47. When in the reciprocating mode, therefore, the circular knitting machine may make two zones of different thickness, whether in forefoot region 31 or heel region 33.

Sock 10 provides an example of one type of apparel with zonal force attenuation properties. With reference to FIG. 8, an article of footwear 50 having an upper 51 and a sole structure 52 is disclosed. Each of upper 51 and sole structure 52 may have a generally conventional configuration. In contrast with a conventional article of footwear, however, footwear 50 incorporates a sockliner 53 that also has zonal force attenuation properties. With reference to FIG. 9, an upper surface of sockliner 53, which provides a foot-supporting surface for footwear 10, includes a plurality of zones 41'-47' that correspond in position to zones 41-47 of sock 10. As depicted in FIGS. 10A-10C, zones 41-47 exhibit differing thicknesses that impart different degrees of force attenuation. Accordingly, concepts related to sock 10, as discussed above, may also be applied to other articles of apparel, including footwear.

The invention is disclosed above and in the accompanying drawings with reference to a variety of embodiments. The purpose served by the disclosure, however, is to provide an example of the various features and concepts related to

aspects of the invention, not to limit the scope of aspects of the invention. One skilled in the relevant art will recognize that numerous variations and modifications may be made to the embodiments described above without departing from the scope of the invention, as defined by the appended claims.

That which is claimed is:

1. An article of apparel comprising a foot-supporting area for extending adjacent to a plantar surface of a foot, the foot-supporting area having:

a forefoot region having a first zone positioned on a medial side of the foot-supporting area, a first portion of the first zone extending along the medial side of the foot-supporting area, and a second portion of the first zone extending into a center of the foot-supporting area and terminating in the center of the foot supporting area, the first zone having a first thickness, each of a lateral edge and a rear edge of the first zone abutting edges of a zone having a thickness different than the first thickness, and an entire continuous outer periphery of the first zone having an L shaped configuration;

an arch region having (a) a second zone positioned on a lateral side of the foot-supporting area, the second zone having a second thickness that is less than the first thickness and (b) a third zone positioned on the medial side of the foot-supporting area, the third zone having a third thickness that is less than the second thickness; and a heel region having a fourth zone positioned on at least the lateral side of the foot-supporting area, the fourth zone having the first thickness.

2. The article of apparel recited in claim 1, wherein the apparel is a sock.

3. The article of apparel recited in claim 2, wherein the first zone, second zone, and third zone are areas of the sock having different types of knit structures.

4. The article of apparel recited in claim 2, wherein yarns with different yarn counts are utilized for each of the first zone, the second zone, and the third zone.

5. The article of apparel recited in claim 2, wherein yarns with different yarn counts and colors are utilized for each of the first zone, the second zone, and the third zone.

6. The article of apparel recited in claim 2, wherein the first zone and the second zone are formed from terry knit structures with different loop heights.

7. The article of apparel recited in claim 1, wherein the apparel is a shoe and the foot-supporting area is a sockliner located within the shoe.

8. The article of apparel recited in claim 7, wherein an upper surface of the sockliner includes a textile material having the first zone, the second zone, the third zone, and the fourth zone.

9. The article of apparel recited in claim 1, wherein the forefoot region and the arch region include a fifth zone positioned on the lateral side of the foot-supporting area, the fifth zone having a thickness between the first thickness and the second thickness.

10. The article of apparel recited in claim 1, wherein the heel region includes a sixth zone positioned between the fourth zone and the second zone, the sixth zone having a thickness between the first thickness and the second thickness.

11. An article of apparel comprising a foot-supporting area for extending adjacent to a plantar surface of a foot, the foot-supporting area having:

a forefoot region having a first zone, with an entire continuous outer periphery of the first zone having an L-shaped configuration, a first portion of the first zone extending along a medial side of the foot-supporting



area, and a second portion of the first zone extending into a center of the foot-supporting area and terminating in the center of the foot supporting area, the first zone having a first thickness, each of a lateral edge and a rear edge of the first zone abutting edges of a zone having a thickness different than the first thickness;

an arch region having a second zone and a third zone, the second zone extending along a lateral side of the foot-supporting area, and the third zone extending along the medial side of the foot-supporting area, the second zone having a second thickness and the third zone having a third thickness, the first thickness being greater than the second thickness, and second thickness being greater than the third thickness; and

a heel region having a fourth zone extending along at least the lateral side of the foot-supporting area, the fourth zone having a fourth thickness that is greater than the second thickness.

12. The article of apparel recited in claim 11, wherein the apparel is a sock.

13. The article of apparel recited in claim 12, wherein the first zone, second zone, and third zone are areas of the sock having different types of knit structures.

14. The article of apparel recited in claim 12, wherein yarns with different yarn counts are utilized for each of the first zone, the second zone, and the third zone.

15. The article of apparel recited in claim 12, wherein yarns with different yarn counts and colors are utilized for each of the first zone, the second zone, and the third zone.

16. The article of apparel recited in claim 12, wherein the first zone and the second zone are formed from terry knit structures with different loop heights.

17. The article of apparel recited in claim 11, wherein the apparel is a shoe and the foot-supporting area is a sockliner located within the shoe.

18. The article of apparel recited in claim 17, wherein an upper surface of the sockliner includes a textile material having the first zone, the second zone, the third zone, and the fourth zone.

19. The article of apparel recited in claim 11, wherein the forefoot region and the arch region include a fifth zone positioned on the lateral side of the foot-supporting area, the fifth zone having a thickness between the first thickness and the second thickness.

20. The article of apparel recited in claim 11, wherein the heel region includes a sixth zone positioned between the fourth zone and the second zone, the sixth zone having a thickness between the first thickness and the second thickness.

21. The article of apparel of claim 11, further including a fifth zone located in the forefoot region, the fifth zone extending around the second portion of the first zone and having a fifth thickness between the first thickness and the second thickness.

22. An article of apparel comprising a foot-supporting area for extending adjacent to a plantar surface of a foot, the foot-supporting area having:

a first zone configured to correspond in location with a position of a first proximal phalanx and at least a first metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot, a second metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot, and a third metacarpo-phalangeal joint of the foot, a first portion of the first zone extending along a medial side of the foot-supporting area, and a second portion of the first zone extending into a center of the foot-supporting area and terminating

in the center of the foot supporting area, the first zone having a first thickness, each of a lateral edge and a rear edge of the first zone abutting edges of a zone having a thickness different than the first thickness, an entire continuous outer periphery of the first zone having an L shaped configuration;

a second zone configured to correspond in location with a calcaneus of the foot, the second zone having the first thickness; and

a third zone corresponding in location with areas not corresponding with the first zone and the second zone, the third zone having at least one thickness that is less than the first thickness.

23. The article of apparel recited in claim 22, wherein the third zone includes a first area configured to correspond in location with at least one of a fourth metatarsal and a fifth metatarsal and a second area configured to correspond in location with at least a first metatarsal, a second metatarsal, and a third metatarsal, the second area having a lesser thickness than the first area.

24. The article of apparel recited in claim 22, wherein the apparel is a sock.

25. The article of apparel recited in claim 22, wherein the first zone, second zone, and third zone are areas of the sock having different types of knit structures.

26. The article of apparel recited in claim 22, wherein yarns with different yarn counts are utilized for at least two of the first zone, the second zone, and the third zone.

27. The article of apparel recited in claim 22 wherein yarns with different yarn counts and colors are utilized for at least two of the first zone, the second zone, and the third zone.

28. The article of apparel recited in claim 22, wherein the first zone and at least part of the second zone are formed from terry knit structures with different loop heights.

29. The article of apparel recited in claim 22, wherein the apparel is a shoe and the foot-supporting area is a sockliner located within the shoe, and an upper surface of the sockliner includes a textile material having the first zone, the second zone, and the third zone.

30. An article of apparel comprising a foot-supporting area for extending adjacent to a plantar surface of a foot, a forefoot region of the foot-supporting area having a first zone, with an entire continuous outer periphery of the first zone having an L-shaped configuration, and a second zone forming a remainder of the forefoot region and extending substantially around the first zone on at least three sides, the L-shaped first zone including a first portion extending along a medial side of the forefoot region of the foot-supporting area, and a second portion of the L-shaped first zone extending into a center of the foot-supporting area and terminating in the center of the foot supporting area, the L-shaped first zone having a first thickness and the second zone having a second thickness less than the first thickness, each of a lateral edge and a rear edge of the first zone abutting edges of a zone having a thickness different than the first thickness.

31. The article of apparel recited in claim 30, wherein an arch region of the foot-supporting area has a pair of zones extending longitudinally, and each of the pair of zones have different thicknesses.

32. The article of apparel recited in claim 30, wherein the heel region has another zone with a thickness equal to the first zone in the forefoot region.

33. The article of apparel recited in claim 30, wherein the apparel is a sock.